

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

CONTACT: Randall Kremer  
Dena Crosson  
(202) 842-6353

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WORKS BY JOSEPH STELLA AND ALFRED STIEGLITZ  
ON VIEW AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, June 9, 1987 - A group of New York-inspired works by Joseph Stella (1877-1946) and Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) are now on view at the National Gallery of Art. New York Interpreted: Joseph Stella, Alfred Stieglitz, is a celebration of two great American modernists and their fascination with the urban landscape of New York City. Five Joseph Stella paintings, each one measuring more than seven feet in height, are being lent by the Newark Museum. They are joined by 21 Alfred Stieglitz photographs from the Alfred Stieglitz Collection of the National Gallery of Art. The photographs were given to the Gallery by Georgia O'Keeffe and the Alfred Stieglitz Estate. The exhibition is on view on the mezzanine level of the National Gallery's East Building through Sun., Aug. 16, 1987.

The exhibition brings to Washington Joseph Stella's most ambitious project, The Voice of the City of New York Interpreted (1920-1922). Jeremy Strick, assistant curator of 20th-century art at the National Gallery and coordinator of the exhibition, describes the series of paintings as "a blending of the artist's original mixture of modernist styles with the traditional format of the Italian five-paneled altarpiece. The large paintings convey a sense of awe, horror and fascination as one gazes upon the spectacle of the modern city, blazing with light and energy."

(more)



Among the Alfred Stieglitz photographs on view is The Flat-Iron (1902), his first photograph of a New York skyscraper. The Flat-Iron building is also seen in the center of The Skyscrapers, the middle panel of Joseph Stella's The Voice of the City of New York Interpreted. Also on view is one Stieglitz's most famous photographs, The Steerage (1907), which depicts the upper and lower decks of an emigrant ship.

The exhibition includes a series of New York photographs from 1915 and 1916 which record different views from Stieglitz' gallery and apartment windows. According to Strick, the series shares much in common with photographs Steiglitz took in the 1930s, "where New York appears as a pristine ideal of man-made forms set against a changing sky." As historical records the photographs also provide fascinating documentation of the great changes that New York City underwent as its skyline moved upward.

The Newark Museum, now undergoing renovation, will also lend to the National Gallery Thomas Cole's The Arch of Nero (1846) and Fitz Hugh Lane's The Fort and Ten Pound Island, Gloucester (1848). These paintings will be temporarily installed with the Gallery's permanent collection of American paintings.

### Joseph Stella

Joseph Stella was one of the pioneers of American modernism. Born in Muro Lucano, a small village near Naples, Italy, Stella immigrated to the United States in 1896 at the age of 18. He studied with the American academic painter William Merritt Chase and between 1905 and 1909 came under the influence of the Ashcan school of American realism. Traveling to Europe in 1910, he quickly absorbed the innovations of cubism and futurism. Upon his return to New York in 1912, he seized upon the American urban and industrial landscape as the ideal subject for his art.



Alfred Steiglitz

Alfred Stieglitz played a pivotal role in the history of American art. With his influential gallery "291" Stieglitz helped introduce the art of Matisse, Cezanne, Picasso, Braque and Brancusi to America prior to the First World War. He also supported an important group of American modernist painters, including Georgia O'Keeffe, Arthur Dove, John Marin and Max Weber. As publisher of the journals Camera Notes (1897-1902) and Camera Work (1903-1917), Stieglitz campaigned for the acceptance of photography as a fine art, arguing for a new photographic aesthetic based upon the unique qualities of the medium. However, it was as a photographer that he made his most important contributions.

Stieglitz' early work, from 1887 to about 1901, generally depicted picturesque subject matter. By 1902 he had turned to a more rigorous formal approach characterized by clear, crisply lit compositions often organized around relationships of geometric shapes. From this time Stieglitz concentrated upon a relatively limited range of subjects: portraits of friends and associates, landscapes taken at his summer home at Lake George, New York, a series of photographs of clouds called "Equivalents," taken between 1922 and 1931, and the many photographs of New York City.

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